



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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While the whole crew was busting butt getting ready for the DESA homecoming, my wife Nancy (not to be confused with the 'other' Nancy) spent two weeks laying on Ala Moana Beach in Honolulu. Every time she watched another airliner leave depart from the airport and head east over the beach she'd say, "There goes another plane load of sad people." Soon enough, we were among them. Coming home was tough. Those of you who have made the trip know that the time changes makes your body feel twelve hours out of sync. You want to stay up all night and sleep all day. Of course a lot of the guys in the crew will say, "So what's the difference?"

Coming back aboard SLATER I was amazed. My instruction had been not to call me except for catastrophic emergencies such as running out of sugar, cream or coffee. They didn't. For two weeks, the crew didn't call me and I didn't call them. Everything got done. More than everything got done. A lesser guy could feel insecure. The tours got booked, the visitors got greeted, the bills got paid, the sides got painted, the superstructure got sprayed and the decks got nonskid. **Nancy** handled the tours, **Deb** had the planning for the big convention under control and **Raf** had the deck force all cranked up. Much credit goes to **Gene Cellini** who took about three weeks off of work to spray paint the whole main deck house and all the gun tubs. That wasn't even on my dream list, as it was beyond my wildest expectations. It made the whole ship shine like she just came out of the builders' yard in Tampa. The crew cleaned out the aft crew's quarters and repainted the head and the decks on the aft passageway. Everyone swept, swabbed and polished for the big day. **Claire** vacuumed out the bosun's locker and **Pat Perrella** even put out monogrammed "S" towels in the heads for our special guests.

The ship fitters finished fabricating brackets and mounting the whip antennas on the 03 level forward. Now it's up to **Don** and **Jerry** to wire them in. The electricians have been working on the lighting aft. The **Naval Reservists** plumbed in the feed water lines to the trough and display urinals aft. **Doug Tanner** got **GE** to donate a used but beautiful Miller Welding machine that is being installed as I write. **Doug, Jude, Tim Benner, Barry and Gary** are installing the machine. Doug is also getting ready to hang Jude over the side next week to start welding on the **SLATER** letters in the fantail.

The side painting crew from National Surface Prep finished the sides a week before the Convention, and **Tom Moore** cut in the boot top and painted the draft marks. Great credit goes to the NSP guys; especially **Dean and Chris** who supervised the lion share of the job. In a word, **SLATER** looks beautiful. A lot of people are really grateful to you guys.

After the hull painting equipment was disbanded it was time for the deck crew to roll into operation and the same force we mentioned in last month's SIGNALS continued their push to have the decks "shipyard" fresh for the Convention. **Raf** kept the equipment organized and **Chris Fedden, Dick Pavlovic, Ed Whitbeck, Pat Cancilla, Dan Wing, Erik Collin, Mike Muzio, Gene Cellini, Dick Smith and Earl Gillette** left no spot unpainted! The smiles of those crossing on to the ship was the greatest reward for everyone's efforts.

The only disappointment for the Convention was the Whaleboat. **Larry Rockwood** and the gang at **Scarano's** worked their tails off to try to have the boat ready. **Roy Gunther** had the rigging ready to go, **Clark Farnsworth** came down with his boat ready to tow the whaleboat up, and **Hack Charbonneau** spent two days aboard prepping, but it wasn't to be. Time ran out, so we decided to wait until after the Convention. It may be a blessing as now Larry and the crew can take their time to finish her up right. But by the time you read this I suspect the whaleboat will once again be hanging in the davits.

Whaleboat Interior Work



SCARANO workers and Roy Gunther (right)
"Let's keep her here a little while longer!"

A fine rainy day



The only thing we couldn't control was the weather. As the big day approached we gradually watched the long range forecast, which called for great weather while it was long range; gradually deteriorated until it called for a ninety percent chance of rain by the time it became the short range forecast. The skies looked ominous as the twelfth dawned, but the rain held off.

Several of the crew led by **Dick Smith** and **Tom Moore** met for breakfast at zero -dark thirty at the truck stop and then went to the ship to begin setting up the four hundred chairs, the parking and the ceremonial set up. We rented two large tents, one for the gift shop and one as an after thought, "just in case" it rained. Everyone who thought they could arrive early and beat the rush was sadly mistaken. The cars started to roll in at 0730 and the busses at 0800. The parking detail led by **Don Kruse** and **Gordon Lattey** did a great job of finding a place for everyone. We estimate about seven hundred DESA folks arrived for the

ceremony.

At 0900, all visitors were piped to the pier and the ceremony began with welcoming remarks by our own Mayor Jennings. The **SLATER volunteer color guard** posted the colors and the ceremony began. I believe the high point for all of us was the inclusion of a British Memorial for the seventeen DE's that were lost serving the Royal Navy. Four Brit vets lead by **Ralph Parkes-Pfeil** of **HMS GARDINER K 478/DE 274**, read off the role call of the British DE's lost in service. I believe that the low point for all of us was the fact that the skies opened up with rain as Ralph was reading the names of the British ships. The crowd scurried for cover, but the dignitaries had no choice but to carry on as raincoats and umbrellas were passed aft to the fantail. Ralph is made of hardy stock, being one of six survivors from a corvette that was sunk prior to his assignment to **GARDINER**, and shrugged off the rain referring to it as typical "Bristol Sunshine". IT was a LONG two- minutes of silence.

Albany's Mayor Jennings Speaks at Memorial Service



Joint DESA - Royal Navy Memorial Participants (l-r)

- B. Bass, HMS Rutherford (DE-93) K558
- DESA Pres T. Kidd, USS K M Willett (DE-354)
- D. Lingard, HMS Bentinck (DE-52) K314
- L. Garland, HMS Calder (DE-58) K348
- R. Parkes-Pfeil, HMS Gardiner (DE-274) K478



SLATER COLORGUARD



The rain continued as **Tom Gruber** read the role of honor of the fifteen American DE's lost in service in World War II, with **Bob Fowler** tolling the bell. And it continued as **Bill Burkholder** played taps, **Dick Ager** sang the National Anthem, and the **SLATER Volunteers** retired the colors. Of all the people out there, the color guard had everyone's utmost respect and sympathy. Unable to run for cover, don raincoats, or break out umbrellas, they stood there solemnly dripping with dignity until their role was completed. Thank you to **Tom Pollock, Charles Miner, Ken Kaskoun, Chief Art Dott, Chief Dave Floyd, Chief Adrienne Daniels, Dave Riffley, Dick Walker, and Floyd Hunt** for taking it on the chin in the face of adversity - WELL DONE.

The Albany Police Pipes and Drums played "Amazing Grace", and Reverend Frederick Collins did the benediction. Fittingly, this ceremony on SLATER's deck was the twenty-fifth DESA Memorial Service. And as the ceremony ended, so did the rain. The ship was opened up to the DESA sailors and their families who were all amazed at the progress that had been made on the ship since her arrival and recommissioning in Manhattan. All the SLATER volunteers can share in the praise heaped on their efforts by our DESA visitors who never thought the ship could look this good. In a word, "You did it."

As the remainder of DESA Week progressed we were amazed as the buses & vans kept coming back as the DE Veterans and their families returned to visit and share memories and friendships with shipmates. Several Ship Reunions were

DE "Favorite" compartment



Most stories told about here.

also held along with the Convention and visitors arrived and inspected every inch of SLATER. All the ladies also showed the WW II "Rosie The Riveter" stamina as they trooped right along up & down the ladders and even into some engine spaces to see where their men had slept or stood watch. It was a marvelous experience for all of us at SLATER as well as these fine folk. Pat Perrella had set up a museum exhibit in the aft crew's quarters and it soon became filled with DE vets looking at the various DE memorabilia that has been donated to the SLATER Collections. It is amazing how a simple object such as a "ditty bag" or worn commissioning pennant can spark a wealth of memories. We were proud to be able to



Sid Morrow former Lt.j.g. USS O'Flaherty DE-340 shows his family how the aft 20's were used, during DESA Convention

display these items and it's the only beginning of SLATER's mission as a DE Museum.



Joanne - Sharon - Liz



Joanne McFadden cleaning case



Welcoming Banner - Luggage Retrieval Area



Several other planned projects also were finished by Convention time. The Exhibit at the Albany International Airport had been planned early in the year after a visit to SLATER by John Egan from the airport. Skipper Frank Lasch toured Slater with John & he offered his assistance with an exhibit. Dave Meyersburg, Collections Manager and Joanne McFadden Collections assistant started the preparations and it was finally set up to greet the Friday Convention arrivals. Five showcases containing various Destroyer Escort items and an informational poster were in the central arrival/departure area along with a welcoming banner in the luggage retrieval area that presented a special tribute to the DE Sailors as they came to Albany. Special "thanks" for invaluable assistance with this exhibit also goes to Greg Krawczyk, CO of the Albany Reserve Center, Liz Blum, Curatorial Assistant at the Airport and Sharon Bates, Director of the Art & Culture Program.

Finished Exhibit - Albany International Airport - departure/arrival corridor



The other "Underground" Project involved the issuance of a Commemorative Postal Cover and Cancellation by the Albany Post Office to honor the 25th Annual DESA Convention. This project was initiated by SLATER Webmaster, Col. Michael J. Stenzel who designed the cachet and cancellation. Additional contacts with the Post Office were made by Board member, Col Kevin Lynch and Pat Perrella arranged for the printing with our friends at Jordan Graphics. Albany Postmaster Joe Finan, Executive VP of the National Assoc. of Letter Carriers and Navy veteran, Charlie Finnegan and Customer Relations Coordinator Mary K. Madonna attended the DESA Convention opening Ceremonies to present framed plaques to Tom Kidd, DESA President, Sam Saylor, DEHF President and Mike Stenzel on behalf of SLATER.



POSTAL PLAQUES PRESENTATION
Saylor, LTC Lynch, Perrella, COL Stenzel, Postmaster Finan, Finnegan



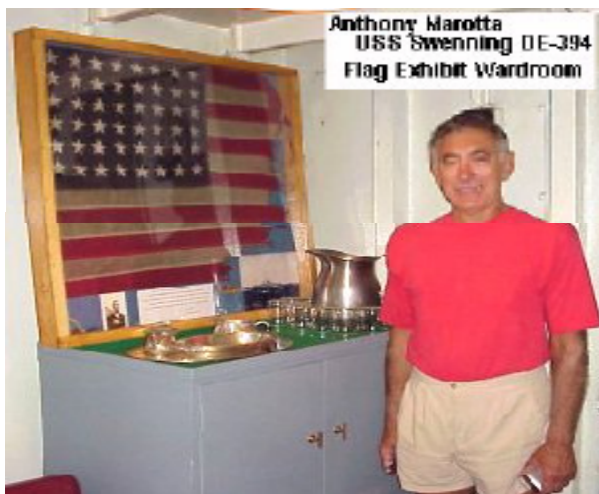
Complimentary covers were also given to the DESA Convention attendees as a gift on behalf of SLATER and postal representative Grace carefully hand stamped each cover at the Slater Station during the Memorial Service & visit. The covers are also available for sale in our Ship's Store until the supply runs out. Speaking of the Ship's Store, our workers also did an outstanding job of assisting customers and keeping the items available and dry throughout the periods of rain. Pat Cancilla, Annette & Les Beauchaine, Eric & Julie Weidmann, Maralyn Walker, Claire Oesterreich and Nancy Buxton kept the cash registers rolling along with this most important income for the ship. Nancy had added several new items and remember; it's not too early to start thinking about doing your holiday shopping right here at SLATER's Dock. We'll be telling you more about what is available in the next few issues so stay tuned.

Fundraising efforts are also continuing behind the scenes as Skipper Frank Lasch keeps getting the work out about his financial plan for SLATER's future. The returns from the Ship Coordinator mailing are very favorable. Also, additional ships represented from the Destroyer Escort Commanders are: USS ULVERT M MOORE DE-442, STADTFELD DE-29, MAURICE J. MANUEL DE-351, WALTER B COBB APD-106, and KLINE APD-120. Thank you all.

It's hard to believe that after all of our planning & anticipation the DESA Convention is over and our sailors have returned home happier for the experience of seeing a Destroyer Escort again. When I look at the calendar however, I see several more Reunion Groups will be visiting Albany & SLATER this fall so we'll keep it and give you another report on the highlights next month. If you are reading this and haven't been down to visit the time is right as the ship has never looked better (in about 55 years, anyway) . Our visitor tally is reported to be 10,803 from April opening to the end of August. This compares to last year's 8,751 and in 1998, 7,208. Your visit will help us finish with some great numbers for 2000 & help us with some needed income so come on down. A real pleasure with our visitors has been the number of DE family groups where the former sailor is escorting sons and grandsons while explaining the ship to them.



Slater Veteran Jack Reynolds with Family
(Eric Weidman, Slater Guide at left)



One of the most recent visitors doing this was **SLATER** Veteran **Jack Reynolds** from Swansea, MA. Jack was a former radarman and quite pleased to see CIC looking so smart. **Anthony Marotta** from Guilderland also made a visit to see the flag exhibit dedicated to **Vincent Antonucci, USS SWENNING DE-394** who was his wife Jean's Uncle.

The volunteers are holding their Annual get together this Saturday and a good turn out is expected to test out Chef **Frank Perrella's** cooking. Angel **Claire Oesterreich** has sent out the reminders to the crew and will be assisting the cook along with **Gordon Lattey**. Some of our NYC friends are also planning to attend & this should be a real challenge to Frank as they all enjoyed the gourmet meals of former Ship Super- **Lou Yacullo**.

We'll also be getting ready to greet the **MICHIGAN DESA** crew once again the first week in October. **Dick Breil** and **Ron Zarem** report they will also have some crew from other areas and I'm getting the work detail all set for them. They have contributed so much to this project all of us are looking forward to their visit so they can see how we continued their work in many areas. They'll let us know if we've been slacking off in their absence!

I just hope I haven't forgotten anyone out there who has contributed to this month's fantastic work aboard **SLATER** -if I have, I apologize as all of you have made so many sacrifices to bring us to this point. I'm still catching up with the scuttlebutt following my "liberty" and also trying to track down the origins of some tales about a "VIDEO" that was filmed aboard ship during my absence. There is also an ugly shade of purple on **SLATER's** precious hull on the Website and I can't locate the perpetrator of that sacrilegious deed although anyone I ask tells me the, "paint must have got mixed up - but we fixed it !"

SEE YOU NEXT MONTH - - - -

